



Community Development

2025 NE Kresky Avenue
Chehalis WA 98532

To: BoCC
CC: Erik Martin, County Manager
From: Lee Napier, Director
RE: Read Ahead Memo WRIA 13 Watershed Restoration & Enhancement Plan Adoption

Action Required: ☐ Meeting ☐ Consent ☒ Discussion ☐ Hearing

Staff Recommendation:

- Accept document as currently written provided no substantive comments were received.
- Place adoption resolution on an upcoming agenda

Background/Supporting Documentation: The Department of Ecology, with guidance from the Deschutes Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Committee (WREC), has released for review a final draft Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Plan for the Deschutes Watershed (WRIA 13). The intent of the final draft plan is to meet the requirements of Chapter 90.94 RCW, Streamflow Restoration. This state law addresses the concerns related to permit exempt wells that surfaced in the Hirst Decision.

Because WRIA 13 does not have a watershed organization like the Chehalis Basin Partnership in WRIs 22-23, the Department of Ecology was the responsible lead for developing the plan with guidance by the WREC. In addition to Lewis County, WREC representation included other governmental entities and interest-based organizations within Thurston County.

The plan's organization covers: an overview of the watershed and its subbasins; a projection of future water demand by permit exempt wells and their anticipated impacts; a list of projects and actions to mitigate those impacts; a list of general policy recommendations for managing water resources in the watershed; and an analysis of the net ecological benefits of the projects and actions.

It is important to note that Lewis County accounts for a small portion of WRIA 13. All of it is industrial forest land primarily owned by the Weyerhaeuser

Company. There are no residences or permit exempt wells within this section of the county. Given the lack of development in this part of WRIA 13, the focus of the draft plan has minimal application to Lewis County.

Lewis County representation on the WRIA 13 WREC has focused on ensuring that the policy recommendations in the plan apply only to the Thurston County portions of the watershed. "The Committee recommends that Lewis County be exempt from policy recommendations at this time because of the lack of PE well growth in the Lewis County portion of WRIA 13."¹ Many of these policy recommendations would create significant impacts on Lewis County resources. It was also important to avoid the appearance of Lewis County adopting policies that citizens might interpret as potentially applying elsewhere in the county's watersheds. Furthermore, there are no proposed projects in the plan located within Lewis County that count towards the net ecological benefit calculation.

The option remains open for Lewis County to participate in a Deschutes Watershed Council if one forms in the future. County participation in such a group would require additional staff involvement and potentially a monetary contribution. However, the plan currently leaves the county out of any commitment towards the initial formation of this group.

The final draft plan currently is in circulation before the participating WREC government entities and organizations for review and approval. The Department of Ecology is requesting approval from each governmental entity or organization by April 20, 2021. If any participating member fails to approve the plan, the WREC may seek to find a compromise that facilitates adoption. However, if that does not happen by June 30, 2021, the plan will become null and void. The Department of Ecology would initiate rule making for the WRIA in accordance RCW 90.94030(3)(h). This step likely would not affect Lewis County.

Next steps-

1. Determine if the Board of County Commissioners is ready to have a resolution brought before them to approve the plan or if there is a request for further briefings.
2. Identify the approved signatory for plan.
3. Adopt the resolution by April 13, 2021.

Attachments:

1. [WRIA 13 Final Draft Plan](#)

¹ Chapter 6, Section 6.1, page 62